

ROME as Palimpsests

FROM RUINS TO VIRTUAL REALITY

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(he, him, his · lui, lo, gli, tu)

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106 Old Library

class code: ITAL B308
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Bryn Mawr College

From the urban dream that Raphael confessed to pope Leo X in the middle of the Renaissance to the parkour on the top of the Colosseum in the *Assassin's Creed* video-games, Rome has always been both a memory and a vision: a place of nostalgia and endless potential. In this course we will investigate some crucial places, moments, and ideas in the modern history of this ancient capital of Western culture: XVI century Mannerist painting and the Pop Art of Piazza del Popolo, the early modern re-uses of the Colosseum and its cubic clone designed under fascism, the narrations of Romantic grand-tours and the ones of contemporary postcolonial authors. We will adopt a trans-historical and inter-disciplinary perspective, focusing on the main attempts to revive the glory of the ancient empire. We will try to understand whether Italy's capital is a museum to be preserved, an old laboratory of urban innovations, a cemetery, a sanctuary, or simply an amalgam of past and future, glory and misery, beauty and horror.

Assessment components

30% · Participation
10% · One Word Lecture
30% · Journal/Response
30% · Final Workshop

Resources

All required readings will be on Moodle, along with some multimedia material. Further readings are available in the library. Objects and images that we will focus on in the Intermezzo and for the Final Workshop are in the Bryn Mawr College collection and will be exhibited for us.

CALENDAR

Part I (weeks 2-5)

From the early Renaissance to the Baroque (late XIII-XVII century)

* First Journal/Response due on Feb 24

Intermezzo (weeks 6-7)

On images and things

Spring Break

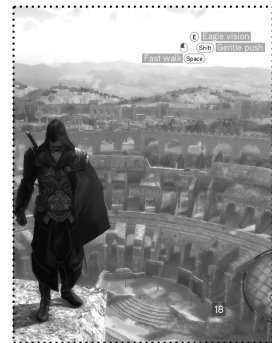
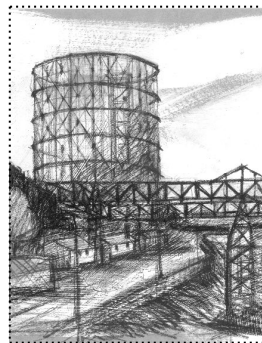
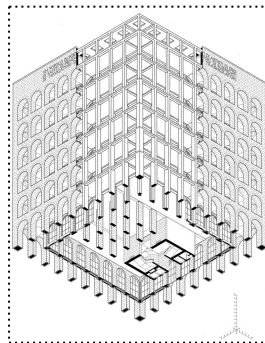
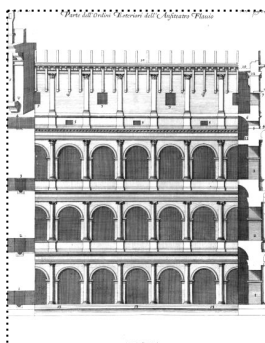
Part II (weeks 8-11)

From the end of Risorgimento to Postmodern fantasies

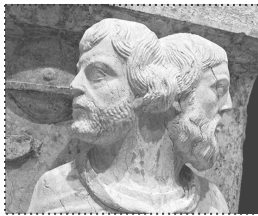
* Second Journal/Response due on Apr 14

Final Workshop (weeks 12-14)

Visiting Rome by proxy



This class is designed as a collaborative seminar with a workshop component, short lectures by students, and interactive lecturing by the instructor. Its main goal is to look at modern Rome, from the early Renaissance to the present age, as a productive problem in the Humanities: an object of study that works as a gateway to large questions about temporality, cultural deaths and rebirths, origins and originality, and what we call 'the West'. We will discuss many themes, but two recurring ones will certainly be the Italian and European roots of the culture of today's American empire and the very experience of learning about Rome in a college that has had a long and fruitful cultural fascination for the city and what it stands for in aesthetic and ethical terms.



Our patron for this course is Janus. Janus has two faces, and his four eyes look forward and behind simultaneously. In ancient Roman religion and in its iconographic and literary revivals through early and late modernity, Janus represents beginnings and ends, gateways, doors.



FOUNDATIONS OF OUR CLASS COVENANT

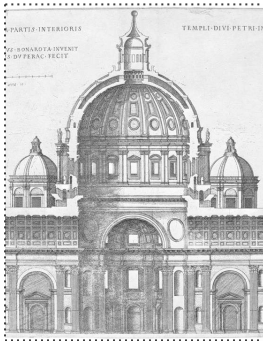
On our first meeting, we determined that we all care about the following rules, and that we think they will help us to reach our goals in this class. While this list is open to additions and re-formulations, this is the founding covenant for the class.

- Students will always come to class prepared (i.e., they will read all the assigned readings each week and take some time to think about them and record their reactions and impressions in their journal). The instructor will always address the readings in class.
- Silence is fine. There is no need to repeat someone else's ideas in class discussions, and it is better to build on them.
- The instructor will make the learning environment comfortable by avoiding 'cold calling' and too much walking around. Students will advise the instructor on how to make the learning environment work best for them.
- Questions to the class, especially from the instructor, should always be more specific than a simple "what do you think?"
- Lecturing is fine, but the learning style of this class should be mostly based on interaction and collaborative efforts to understand texts, images, and problems.
- Group activities should be designed so that students don't always end up interacting with the same person or group of peers. Students are encouraged to change seats often if they feel comfortable with that, but if this doesn't happen the instructor will find ways to mix the group during such activities.
- Questions are encouraged, and are a significant part of the teaching style. Questions are always open to the whole class, not just addressed to the instructor. Most answers are not definitive.
- No topic is taboo, as long as it relates to the material of the class. It is always okay to point out that a topic is uncomfortable, offensive, or problematic, and the whole class will discuss openly about how to address the situation. During discussions, everyone will always do their best to listen, be open and inclusive, and respect interlocutors.
- The instructor will provide in depth questions about the readings. Students giving one word lectures are also encouraged to integrate questions for the class in their presentation.
- When someone wants to intervene in a discussion, they can raise their hand. When they have a direct follow up to what someone is saying, they will raise a pen or pencil instead and skip the line. The instructor will keep track of hands and pens and maintain a running queue.
- Laptops and electronic devices (as well as snacks and beverages) are okay in class, as long as they are not a source of distraction and disruption. We respect the time of other people in the classroom.

Assessment Components

I. PARTICIPATION

Attendance is crucial for the success of this class. If you absolutely cannot attend a class meeting, please inform me in advance and let's figure out together how to make up for the missed class. It is also absolutely crucial to come to class prepared. If serious reasons prevent you from completing the readings for a class, please be present anyway and inform me about such reasons. Not all readings require the same level of attention and investment, but you are expected to come to class with impressions and, ideally, questions about them. Actively participating in discussions and activities during class time is the best way to show your participation. You are always encouraged to be vocal, and to let me know how to make it easier for you to speak in class. However, there are many other ways to show that you are participating. You can, for instance, take good notes (which may include drawings, photos of marginalia on your copy of the readings, quotes from class discussion) in class and attach them to your journal submission, as a separate document. You can integrate the journal itself with elaborations of things that you have learned in class, and with reflections about how class discussion has changed or confirmed your initial perspective on the readings. You can also come to my office hours or schedule an appointment just to have a conversation about what we discussed in class. In sum, I expect you to find your own way to make your participation visible, and I am always available to give you feedback and suggestions on this part of the assessment.



2. ONE WORD LECTURE

Most classes will include this exercise, which is entirely led by a student or a small group of students. The task is to think of one word (or one image, or a combination of one word and one image) that has the potential of connecting the week's readings and defining the main topic(s) of the class. In no more than fifteen minutes, the lecturer will explain why (s)he/they chose that specific word and/or image, and will open a general discussion on the readings and themes of the week by asking no more than three questions to the entire class. I will include a slide with the word and/or the image in my powerpoint, so please send it to me (along with the questions) in advance — no later than 9 am on the day you are lecturing, please! In the case in which more than one student is lecturing on the same day, they are encouraged to share their experience and collaborate but they are not expected to choose the same word and/or image. This portion of the grade is not determined by your performance, but by the generativeness of both the word (and/or image) that you chose and the way you offer the questions to the rest of the class. If you are uncomfortable speaking in public, you can provide me or another student with a written version of your lecture or a one-on-one oral explanation of the word and/or image: the designated speaker, on behalf of the lecturer, will read the text or report to the rest of the class about the conversation (s)he/they had with the lecturer. The questions attached to your lecture should be clear, succinct, and, ideally, they should be 'real questions' (i.e. questions to which you don't have an answer yet).

3. JOURNAL/RESPONSE (2 SUBMISSIONS)

In addition to what you will do in class, an important part of the course is based on the time you will spend with the material outside of class (required readings, images, objects, and further readings). Every week, with a pause during our 'Intermezzo', you will work on a journal about your learning experience. The journal will be centered on your personal response to the assigned material (how it relates to what you already knew, what you learned from it, how it connects with the rest of the course). This journal can take many forms, depending on your specific skills, goals, and learning style: you can write, you can include images and other media, you can record your voice, you can translate, you can include texts that were not assigned and annotate or interpret them. At the deadlines (end of Part I and end Part II of the seminar) you will submit a polished version of your journal for grading: the first submission will be about material covered from week 2 to week 5, the second about material covered from week 8 to week 11. The ideal length of each submission is the equivalent of 5 written pages (double-spaced, 1 inch margin, 12pt font). This means that, if most of your submission is not a written text, you should put into it the same amount of time and energy that a 5 page response would require. It also means that a very good way to approach this task would be to work on the equivalent of a 1-page response each week, and to add the equivalent of an additional page of response when wrapping up the submission. It is important that you work on this journal weekly, rather than concentrating the work in the days before submission: the journal should have an arc, and it is meant to document your engagement with the readings and your progress in the course. I welcome informal submissions of journal entries each week: my feedback on them will not affect this portion of the grade, which is determined by the quality, breath, and honesty of your 2 official submissions. Both partial informal submissions and the official final ones are welcome in Italian, in English, or in a mix of the two languages; a translation will be needed for portions of the submission in other languages. You are encouraged to attach to the journal any material that you produce while working for this class, including notes for the preparation of your one word lecture, brief reviews and impressions about material related to Rome that you encounter during the semester (film, tv, books, songs, webpages, etc.), reports of conversations and discussions with other students, ideas from other classes that connect with what we are doing in our seminar.



4. FINAL WORKSHOP

The last three weeks of our seminar will be mostly dedicated to a workshop based on objects from Bryn Mawr's collection. With the help of curators, we will work on material related to alumnae's experiences in and about Rome. We will research the histories of these objects and of their makers/collectors. We will divide the available material among the workshop participants, and design a way

to share the result of everyone's work with the rest of the college (a small conference, posters, a website, or an archive). Each student will have an individual goal/project, but everyone will be involved in the design and organization of the final coherent display of the workshop results. Therefore, details about this final assignment will be defined collectively at the beginning of the workshop. The whole process (rather than just the final result) of the workshop will determine this portion of the grade.



Ways to Improve Your Participation and Journal

LIBRARY

Please, plan to spend at least one or two afternoons in the library this semester, devoting them to the exploration of further readings listed in this syllabus. Ideally, at least one of your two journal submissions will include references to one or more of the books listed as further readings, or to other material available in the Bi-Co's extremely rich collection of sources about Rome (you are encouraged to describe the very experience of using the library to deepen your understanding of a topic or theme). Any week is good to go to the library, but a particularly good one could be the one of your one word lecture. The library will be an important resource for the final workshop.

USE OF THE COLLECTION

We will take advantage of Bryn Mawr's art collection in two ways: we will spend a week working on a selection of objects during our *Intermezzo*, and we will base our final workshop on material in the collection. No previous knowledge of art history, archaeology or museum studies is expected, but objects should be treated as required readings: they are a crucial part of our seminar, and reading them is a fundamental component of the final workshop.

"THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPERT IN..."

I invite you to choose a specific core interest and to adopt it as your main perspective for contributions to class discussion. It can also be an important mental filter for your journal, and guide your response to the material. You will help the class remember about your adopted 'field of expertise' by interrogating the material from the point of view that you chose and by asking relevant questions during discussions.



Additional Information

OFFICE HOURS & E-MAILS

Take advantage of my office hours and, if you are busy during my office hours, feel free to ask me to schedule an appointment. It is okay to ask about your performance in class and to give suggestions about how to make class better (more clear, more comfortable and inclusive, more focused, more effective). As explained above, I will gladly give you in-advance feedback on portions of your journal/response, and we can discuss it during office hours. Office hours should also be a safe space to admit that you are lost and go over material that you did not understand. Come to office hours with a specific goal in mind and please, help me understand how I can help you with it.

I'll do my best to respond to emails in a timely fashion. However, I receive an average of fifty messages a day, and on most days I only read emails twice a day between 9am and 5pm. Please be patient if I am not able to respond on the same day.

ITALIAN CONCENTRATORS

Students who seek credit towards language requirements will participate in a number of additional meetings held in Italian about class material—the schedule will be based on all the participants' availabilities. They will also perform some written tasks in Italian, and read excerpts from the original version of selected readings. One of the readings assigned for the workshop portion of the course will be substituted with a reading in Italian.

GUEST SPEAKERS & POSSIBLE TRIP

I will invite a number of people to visit us and talk to us about their field of expertise. In particular, I am going to ask Prof. Dale Kinney and Prof. Jeff Cohen to talk to us about questions of Medieval art history and late modern urban studies. Ideally, we will also have guest speakers (either in person or via Skype) about fascist classicism and about writing on Rome.

If resources and time will allow it, I would like to organize a trip to Philadelphia to look at Roman iconographies in the city and visit the Rodin Museum.

READINGS

Readings for this class respond to a variety of genres. The calendar distinguishes roughly between readings related to literature and history and readings related to art and visual media. You will realize soon that the distinction is often subtle and/or arbitrary. These readings have been chosen to provide some background knowledge and material for discussion on the selected topics of this course. They are the result of a personal choice, and can be integrated at any time based on the students' suggestions, curiosity, and intellectual inputs. Readings vary in terms of difficulty and length, but usually shorter readings require a slower, more in depth analysis, while longer one (especially contemporary essays and articles) can be read more quickly, focussing on the main points and arguments. Doubts and confusion are absolutely welcome: bring your questions to class, and let's discuss your reading experience together. You can use your journal to keep track of the challenges that you faced studying this material, and the ways in which you overcame such challenges.

ACCESS

Bryn Mawr College is committed to providing equal access to students with a documented disability. Students needing academic accommodations for a disability must first register with Access Services. Students can call 610-526-7516 to make an appointment with the Access Services Director, Deb Alder, or email her at dalder@brynmawr.edu to begin this confidential process. Once registered, students should schedule an appointment with the professor as early in the semester as possible to share the verification form and make appropriate arrangements. Please note that accommodations are not retroactive and require advance notice to implement. More information can be obtained at the Access Services website. (<http://www.brynmawr.edu/access-services/>). Any student who has a disability-related need to tape record this class first must speak with the Access Services Director and to me. Class members need to be aware that this class may be recorded.

HONOR CODE

In completing all your assignments for this course, you are expected to abide by the Bryn Mawr College Honor Code. See sga.blogs.brynmawr.edu/honor-board/honor-code/ for more information. Note in particular that using someone else's ideas or words without quotation marks and/or bibliographic references is not acceptable in writing texts for Humanities classes. Use of google translator and similar automatic translators is also not acceptable for Italian concentrators. When in doubt about what to do with a source (and within reason), ask me.

Class calendar

Important dates:

Journal response on Part I due on Sunday, February 24

Journal response on Part II due on Sunday, April 14

Week 1

January 23

Foundations

The myth of the foundation of Rome. Rome as a city of ghosts, of demons, of rebirths. The foundations of our course (object, premise, methods, expectations, class covenant).

Part I (weeks 2-5)

From the early Renaissance to the Baroque (late XIII-XVII century)

Week 2

January 30

Ruins

The passion for antiquity in the Renaissance. Archaeology and Restoration as methods to revive the past. How to be modern in an ancient city. The frescoes in the Stanza della Segnatura in the Vatican.

Literature and History

Petrarch, "Letter to Giovanni Colonna," (1350) in *Selected Letters*, trans. Elaine Fantham, Harvard UP 2017

Raphael, "Letter to Pope Leo X," (1519) from Ingrid. Rowland, "Raphael, Angelo Colocci, and the Genesis of the Architectural Orders", *Art Bulletin* 76 (1994): 100.

Art and Visual Media

Glenn W. Most, "Reading Raphael: "The School of Athens" and Its Pre-Text." *Critical Inquiry* 23, no. 1 (1996): 145-82.

Further Readings

Marcia Hall (ed.), *Raphael's School of Athens*, Cambridge UP 1997



Necromancy

Haunted monuments in the eternal city. Benvenuto Cellini’s queer autobiography and the mystery of the Colosseum. The necromantic power of Philology and Imitation.

Literature and History

Benvenuto Cellini, *The autobiography of Benvenuto Cellini* (chapter LXIV), trans. George Bull, Penguin classics 1998

Lorenzo Valla, “On the Donation of Constantine” in Kenneth Gouwens (ed.), *The Italian Renaissance : the essential sources*, Blackwell 2004 (read quickly)

James Turner, *Philology: The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities*, Princeton UP 2014, pp. 33-39

Art and Visual Media

Leonard Barkan, “The Classical Undead: Renaissance and Antiquity Face to Face” *RES* 34 (1998): 9-19.

Further Readings

Leonard Barkan, *Unearthing the Past: Archaeology and Aesthetics in the Making of Renaissance Culture*, Yale UP 1999



Apocalypse

The anxieties of western modernity (centers, boundaries, conflagrations). Mannerist painting and Michelangelo’s frescoes in the Sistine chapel after the Sack of Rome.

Literature and History

Kenneth Gouwens, *Remembering the Renaissance: Humanist Narratives of the Sack of Rome*, Brill 1998 (excerpt)

Art and Visual Media

Excerpts on Michelangelo’s frescoes in the Sistine chapel from *History of Italian Renaissance* (Hartt and Wilkins); *The High Renaissance and Mannerism* (Linda Murray); *The Last Judgement* (Buranelli)

Further Readings

Michelangelo, *Selected Poems and Letters*, ed. by Anthony Mortimer, Penguin 2007

<http://www.bu.edu/core/academics/sistine-chapel/>

The Roman Baroque and the city as a theatre. The myth of Narcissus between poetry and painting, with a special attention for Caravaggio. Fountains in Rome. Imitation as a form of rebirth.

Literature and History

Giambattista Marino, poems on Narcissus (1597)
Jonathan Unglaub, "Metaphorical Reflections" in Poussin and the Poetics of Painting: Pictorial Narrative and the Legacy of Tasso, Cambridge UP 2006 (brief excerpt: pp. 73-77)

Art and Visual Media

Christopher Braider, "The Fountain of Narcissus: The Invention of Subjectivity and the Pauline Ontology of Art in Caravaggio and Rembrandt", *Comparative Literature* 50.4 (1998): 286-315 (focus on pp. 286-298)
Anthony Blunt, "The Fountains" in *Guide to Baroque Rome*, Icon 1982 (read about the Fontana di Trevi and the Fontana del Tritone, then choose a third fountain to focus on. Consider the genre of this reading)

Further Readings

Rossella Vodret Adamo, *Caravaggio's Rome: 1600-1630*, Skira 2012

Intermezzo (weeks 6-7)
On images and things

Photos, prints, sketches

We will spend this session in the presence of objects from the college's collection. A list of items will be given to you in advance, and we will work with curators to access the material and start learning about Bryn Mawr's relationship with Rome. Please, turn in your first comprehensive journal response by Sunday, February 24.

Relics, spolia, souvenirs

Objects that stand for other things, and ways to own the city. Tourism as a trans-historical concept. Conversation with Prof. Dale Kinney on Spolia and Medieval Rome (to be confirmed).

Art and Visual Media

Dale Kinney, "Spolia from the Baths of Caracalla in Sta. Maria in Trastevere," *Art Bulletin* 68.3 (1986): 379-97
Alan Thacker, "Rome of the Martyrs. Saints, Cults and Relics, Fourth to Seventh Centuries," in O'Carragain-de Vegvar, *Roma Felix*, Ashgate 2007
Sarah Benson, "Reproduction, Fragmentation and Collection: Rome and the Origin of Souvenirs," in Lasanky-McLaren, *Architecture and Tourism*, Berg 2004

Further Readings

Dale Kinney and Richard Brilliant (eds.), *Reuse value: spolia and appropriation in art and architecture from Constantine to Sherrie Levine*, Ashgate 2004

Please, during the break take a look at the material on Moodle (folder “Spring Break”).

Part II (weeks 8-11)
From the end of Risorgimento to Postmodern fantasies

Week 8

March 20

Capital

The ‘breccia di Porta Pia’ and the annexation of Rome to the unified kingdom of Italy. The Piedmontese aesthetic colonization and Rome as a capital. Conversation with Prof. Jeffrey Cohen on the visualization and virtual exploration of the urban ‘piano’ of Rome (to be confirmed).

Literature and History

Federico Chabod, “The ‘Mission’ of Rome” in *Italian Foreign Policy: The Statecraft of the Founders, 1870-1896*, trans. William McCuaig, Princeton UP 1996

Art and Visual Media

David Atkinson and Denis Cosgrove, “Urban Rhetoric and Embodied Identities: City, Nation and Empire at the Vittorio Emanuele II Monument in Rome, 1870- 1945,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 88.1 (1998): 28-49

Further Readings

Agatha Ramm, *The Risorgimento*, Routledge 1972

Week 9

March 27

Travertine

The rhetoric and aesthetics of the fascist regime in Rome, capital of the “empire”. The squared colosseum and the E.U.R. area. The mostra Augustea

Literature and History

Ruth Ben-Ghiat, “Why Are So Many Fascist Monuments Still Standing in Italy?” *The New Yorker* (October 5, 2017)
 Anna Notaro, “Exhibiting the New Mussolinian City: Memories of empire in the World Exhibition of Rome (EUR)” *GeoJournal* 51 (2000): 15-22

Art and Visual Media

Ann Thomas Wilkins, “Augustus, Mussolini and the Parallel Imagery of Empire,” in Claudia Lazzaro and Roger J. Crum (eds.), *Donatello Among the Blackshirts. History and Modernity in the Visual Culture of Fascist Italy*, Cornell UP 2005

Further Readings

Borden Painter, *Mussolini’s Rome: Rebuilding the Eternal City*, Palgrave 2005

Elegance

Postwar Rome, the Borgate and Pasolini's poetics of the slums. The economic boom and the Olympic games of 1960. The birth of Italian Pop in Piazza del Popolo.

Literature and History

Goffredo Parise, "Elegance" in *Abeceary* (short story)

Pier Paolo Pasolini, *The Street Kids* (excerpt)

Art and Visual Media

Luca Massimo Barbero, *Imagine: New Imagery in Italian art*, Marsilio 2016 (excerpts on Roman Pop)

Luigia Lonardelli, "'How It Was That I Stopped Painting': Attempts at Distancing in 1960s Italian Art" in Alexander-Ryan (eds.) *International Pop*, Minneapolis 2015

Further Readings

Alberto Moravia, *Roman Tales*, FSC 1957

**Aliens, Vampires & Assassins**

Postmodern ways to access the city: the architectural and genetic illusion of authenticity in the videogame *Assassin's Creed 2* and the colonial anxieties of the role game *Vampires: The Requiem*.

Literature and History

Ennio Flaiano, "A Martian in Rome" (short story)

Art and Visual Media

Douglas Dow, "Historical Veneers: Anachronism, Simulation and History in *Assassin's Creed II*" in Kappell-Elliot (eds.), *Playing with the Past: Digital Games and the Simulation of History*, Bloomsbury 2013

Bailey et al. (eds.), *Requiem for Rome: Vampire - The Requiem*, White Wolf 2007 (excerpt)

Final Workshop (weeks 12-14)
Visiting Rome by proxy

Week 12

April 17

Case 1: Frederick Douglass

Primary

Secondary

Frederick Douglass, excerpts from *Life and Time of Frederick Douglass* (1892)

Robert Levine, "Road to Africa: Frederick Douglass's Rome" *African American Review* 34.2 (2000): 217-231

Please, turn in your second comprehensive journal response by Sunday, April 14.

Week 13

April 24

Case 2: Herman Melville

Primary

Secondary

Herman Melville, excerpts from "Statues in Rome" (1857)

Wendy Stallard Flory, "Melville's "Statues in Rome," Billy Budd, and the Death of Delight", *Lecviathan* 15.3 (2013): 66-80

Week 14

May 3

Case 3: Virginia Woolf

Primary

Virginia Woolf, excerpts from *Travels with Virginia Woolf* (ed. by Jan Morris)